

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION SINCE 1877

BRIEFS

KIDNAP VICTIM STILL HELD BY TERRORISTS

DAPCHI, Nigeria (Special) — Muslim extremists in Dapchi, Nigeria, are continuing to hold one schoolgirl out of the more than 100 who were kidnapped Feb. 19 and released March 21 reportedly because she will not agree to renounce her Christianity and convert to Islam as a condition for her freedom, according to international news sources. Terrorist group Boko Haram, whose name roughly translated means "Western Education is Forbidden," said five of the girls died in captivity after being taken from the Government Girls' Science and Technical College in Dapchi.

TENN. SALONS APPROVE 'IN GOD WE TRUST' USE

NASHVILLE (BP) — Public schools in Tennessee soon could be required to post the phrase, *In God We Trust*, in a "prominent location" if Gov. Bill Haslam signs a bill that cleared the state legislature this week. The bill, known as the National Motto in the Classroom Act, passed the Tennessee House of Representatives March 19 by an 81-8 margin after unanimously clearing the state senate two weeks earlier. At least 19 other states have passed laws similar to the one approved by Tennessee lawmakers, while legislators in Arkansas, Florida, Oklahoma and Wyoming are considering it.

ALA. BAPTIST EDITOR TO RETIRE ON DEC. 31

BIRMINGHAM, AL (BP) — Mississippi College (MC) graduate Bob Terry has announced he will retire Dec. 31 after more than 50 years as a Southern Baptist journalist and editor. A native Alabamian and editor of The Alabama Baptist newspaper for the past 23 years, Terry also served as editor of Missouri Baptists' Word and Way newspaper for 20 years and as associate editor of Kentucky Baptists' Western Recorder for seven years. He earned a B.A. from MC in Clinton in 1965, then went on to earn master's and doctoral degrees from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky.



'TELL ME' RALLY — Baptists and others from the Gautier Christian community listen as Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, challenge them to share their faith during the Feb. 27, 2017, 'Tell Me' rally at First Church, Gautier. (Photo by Tony Martin)

State rallies target lostness

Mississippi believers equipped to share faith

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

In January through March of last year the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board conducted what came to be known as the "Tell Me" rallies, designed to encourage believers to pray for lost

people and invite them to the rallies to hear the Gospel.

Secondly, believers were encouraged at the rallies to learn one Gospel conversation and thirdly, commit to share their faith with someone in 2017.

"The rallies were promoted through our associational mis-

sions directors (AMD). They helped us push information to the churches," said Steve Stone, associate executive director for church growth at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB). "Each AMD planned the event in their area and invited their churches.

"Our focus for the Tell Me Rallies was to help people to understand the lostness in the state of Mississippi, and to begin to look at our state and recognize we are

see RALLIES on p. 6

Governor signs bill limiting abortion

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

Mississippi last week became the state with the most restrictive abortion rules in the nation — at least for a few hours, anyway.

Governor Phil Bryant on March 19 signed into law the Legislature-approved House Bill (HB) 1510, the Gestational Age Act, which limits abortions at Mississippi's only remaining abortion clinic in Jackson to the first 15 weeks after conception.

"I was proud to sign House Bill 1510 this afternoon," Bryant said in a Twitter post. "I am committed to making Mississippi the safest place in America for an unborn child, and this bill will help us achieve that goal."

However, the Jackson Women's Health Organization (JWHO) followed through on their threat to fight the new law and filed a request for a federal court temporary injunction within minutes of the governor's signature. U.S. District Judge Carlton Reeves in Jackson granted the temporary injunction on April 20.

see ABORTION on p. 6

Pastor faces 'absurd' charges in Turkey

IZMIR, Turkey (BP) — American pastor Andrew Brunson has been indicted in Turkey on charges of terrorism.

The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) claims the charges amount to an admission "that Turkey considers sharing the Gospel an act of terrorism."

The 62-page indictment, wholly lacking merit, provides no evidence regarding criminal action by Pastor Andrew, which comes as no surprise, the ACLJ stated in a March 20 news release. "Pastor Andrew, who has lived in Turkey for 23 years, serving as Pastor of the Izmir Resurrection Church,

has maintained his innocence and has reiterated that he has been in Turkey for only one reason, to tell about Jesus Christ. Incredibly, the indictment now admits that Turkey considers sharing the Gospel an 'act of terrorism.'

A court date of April 16 has been set, the ACLJ reported. If convicted, Brunson, 50, could face 35 years in prison.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) reported previously that the case against Brunson was "largely based on a purported 'secret witness' and secret evidence" which Turkish officials refuse to make public.

With the indictment however, the ACLJ stated, "the case file is now finally open, and by the end of the week, we

should have access to all of the alleged evidence."

Various news media outlets reported Brunson was indicted last week and charged with "leadership in a terrorist organization," with prosecutors seeking a possible life sentence. The ACLJ issued an update March 15 implying the indictment may not, in fact, have been submitted in court.

However, this week's ACLJ update clarified that the indictment was submitted last week despite alleged statements by a Turkish prosecutor to the contrary.

When reports of the indictment first surfaced, the USCIRF said it "strongly condemns" the charges and asked the Trump

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Hail, Prince of Peace!

Every generation likely believes that they lived or are living at the pinnacle of man's inhumanity to his fellow man. The Civil War, where advanced weaponry met outdated tactics, would be one extreme example. There was World War I, and the widespread use of devastating chemical warfare. For sheer volume of brutality on a global scale, World War II would be difficult to match.

Today's world situation most probably ranks somewhere close to the top, however, because of the global targeting of innocent non-combatants. We live in a time that allows stateless terrorist groups to move about in the shadows, picking off children.

Nary a day goes by without another report of a homicide bomber somewhere destroying not only himself but everyone around him. Humanitarian workers are slaughtered in cowardly drive-by ambushes. Radical fundamentalists applaud the murders of more than 3,000 people killed on 9/11, and declare that God is glorified by such acts.

Our own home-grown terrorists feel no sympathy for the innocent, in the case of Timothy McVeigh even going to his execution cynically declaring the babies murdered in his bombing of Oklahoma City's Murrah Federal Building were nothing more than "collateral damage." Schools filled with innocent children seem to be a favorite target these days.

Meanwhile, the streets of many great American metropolises are ruled by ruthless gangs willing to do anything to anybody who stands between them and their wildly lucrative drug business. Police are often outmanned and outgunned, and considered by these people as just another obstacle to be eliminated by whatever means necessary.

Factoring abortion into the calculation, has human life ever been worth less? Has human depravity ever gone lower? Have we ever been farther away from our Creator and Father? Perhaps, but there's no doubt the world is in bad shape at the moment.

If we ever needed a Prince of Peace, we need Him this Easter.

We need a Prince of Peace to still the violence that destroys so many people — many of whom go into eternity without salvation. We need a Prince of Peace to compel combatants to lay down their weapons so food and medicine and the Gospel can get to the people who need it most, because that's inarguably more important than political grievances.

We need a Prince of Peace to teach us in America that the differences setting us against one another are only skin deep, and that our loving Heavenly Father loves us all. We need a Prince of Peace to show us how to turn the other cheek, and how two wrongs don't make a right.

We need a Prince of Peace to demonstrate for us how we should raise our children and treat our elders, because we no longer seem to have that instinctual knowledge. We need a Prince of Peace to intercede for the very young and the very old, who we despise so much for the inconvenience they create.

We need a Prince of Peace to help us overcome the pettiness in our small lives, and invite us to become a part of something much bigger and infinitely more important than ourselves. We need a Prince of Peace to keep us focused on the main thing and deliver us from the snares and distractions of the Evil One: money, power, sex, ego, and self-centeredness, to name only a few.

Thank God we have been given just such a Prince of Peace in Jesus Christ — a Prince of Peace who, because he walked among us as one of us, understands us better than we understand ourselves. Thank God we have a Prince of Peace who serves even today as the perfect example of what our Heavenly Father expects of us. Thank God that our Prince of Peace is sufficient to defeat the Evil One and save us from an eternity of damnation.

On this Easter 2018, let us lift our voices in praise to God and Son, and pray that all the people of the world will one day soon know the peace we know that has been so freely given to us by the Savior.

Hail, Prince of Peace!

Cooperation at its finest

According to Southern Baptists' North American Mission Board (NAMB), 269 million people in the United States and Canada do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

If you lined up the spiritually lost outside the front door of your church and counted one person every second as they file by, it would take over 3,113 days — more than eight and a half years — to count the army of the lost in those two countries! As the army of the lost continually grows, the army of the Lord remains strangely silent. The number of baptisms reported by the churches in the Southern Baptist Convention is at its lowest since the 1940's.

What burdened the heart of Jesus should burden our hearts. We read in Matthew 9:36-38, "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."

The harvest is the reason we are here! As someone has astutely observed, "Many Christians are like an arctic river. They're frozen at the mouth."

The good news is that Southern Baptists have more than just a unified budget in the Cooperative Program. We have a unified presence both in North America and around the world through NAMB and the International Mission Board (IMB), sharing the message of God's love and redemption from sin through His Son Jesus Christ.

There are different streams of revenue for NAMB and IMB but both rely heavily on Cooperative Program giving to keep the missionaries on the field. IMB reports it costs on average \$59,500 a year to support a career missionary. Cost for a couple would be double that amount. If we reach the 2018 Cooperative Program budget, Mississippians will give almost six million dollars to IMB and over \$2.6 million dollars to NAMB — and we are not alone. Other state conventions will give through the Cooperative Program and part of their giving will go to support our missionaries in North America and around the globe.

In addition to global missions, Cooperative Program dollars affect the work done in Mississippi to reach those in the Magnolia State who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The Baptist Children's



Guest opinion
with Rick Blythe

Village, new church plants, 32 campus missionaries living across Mississippi, Blue Mountain College, Mississippi College, William Carey University, and the Christian Action Commission are just a few of the beneficiaries of Cooperative Program dollars.

However, the Cooperative Program works to the degree that 47,272 self-governing Southern Baptist churches want it to work. In their book, *Cooperation: The Baptist Way to a Lost World*, Cecil and Susan Ray remind us: "Cooperation has some inherent characteristics that Baptists should keep in mind.

Cooperation is voluntary. The autonomy of the local church is a hallmark of Baptist life. Yet, the desire to fulfill the Great Commission creates Baptists' pull toward togetherness, which gives our system of work great strength. Cooperation needs a purpose. Only a God-given purpose could make Baptists' voluntary system work. The mission mandate magnifies unity and oneness of effort.

Cooperation is based on mutual trust and confidence. The idea of cooperation assumes that the partners involved trust each other. Suspicion and conflict erode our cooperative efforts. Cooperation is weakened when trust is uncertain. Our mission work suffers. Cooperation is effective when trust is assured. Our mission work prospers. Trust arises from our love for the same objectives.

Cooperation requires some forfeiture of individualism. A team is only a team when the members work for a common cause. The price of team achievement is the forfeiture of some individualism. The Christian spirit of interdependence recognizes freedom, yet sees the cause at hand as bigger than individual interest.

Cooperation is the Baptist way to a lost world, and that world is growing exponentially.

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39205-0530.

BAPTISTS

Volume 142 • Number 13 • ISSN 0005-5778

Published weekly except weeks of July 4 and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$11.99 per year payable in advance. Economy plans available for cooperating Mississippi churches. Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS, Member, Association of State Baptist Papers. Deadlines: News items — one calendar week prior to requested publication date. Advertising — two calendar weeks prior to requested publication date. All submissions are subject to editing.

Theories on earth's core inadequate, researchers say

ASHEVILLE (BP and local reports) — If naturalistic theories are correct, Earth's solid inner core shouldn't exist, according to a new research paper in *Earth and Planetary Science Letters* journal.

Current theory says Earth's center consisted of a ball of hot liquid iron 4,200 miles wide until about a billion years ago when the molten metal spontaneously began to solidify.

Now, a planetary scientist at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, say solidification of the core is scientifically impossible.

Spontaneous crystallization of pure molten metal would require a massive drop in temperature. Under the conditions of Earth's core, the iron would need to cool by a factor of 1,000 Kelvins [1,800 degrees Fahrenheit] below its melting point, "and that's a lot of cooling, especially since at the moment the scientific community thinks the Earth cools maybe about 100 degrees Kelvin per billion years," researcher Steven A. Hauck II, professor of planetary geodynamics at Case Western, told *Live Science*.

At that rate of cooling, Earth's core could not have spontaneously solidified about a billion years ago without the involvement of some other factor. The researchers offered one possible theory: Perhaps a massive nugget of solid metal dropped from the Earth's mantle into the liquid core and cooled the molten iron like an ice cube dropping into a glass of water.

However, the scientists admitted that explanation seems unlikely since it would

require an absurdly large nugget with a six-mile radius.

Earth's mantle doesn't contain large enough metal deposits to make that feasible. A smaller nugget would lack the weight necessary to make it fall from the mantle, and even if it did it would disintegrate before it reached the core.

Andrew Snelling, a geologist with Answers in Genesis — an apologetics ministry dedicated to helping Christians defend their faith and effectively proclaim the Gospel, headquartered in Petersburg, Ky. — said secular scientists struggle to find plausible theories for how Earth's inner core formed because they base their assumptions on a naturalistic viewpoint that rules out the supernatural explanation the Bible gives for Earth's origin.

The Biblical account states water covered the Earth before dry land appeared. That means the rocks had to lift up from the waters, implying that somewhere between the initial creation of the planet and the emergence of land, God formed the internal constitution of the Earth.

"It makes sense that God would have formed Earth's inner core right away because everything else necessary for life flows from that," Snelling said. "The core is very important to the Earth's magnetic field, which encompasses the planet and acts as a shield of protection."

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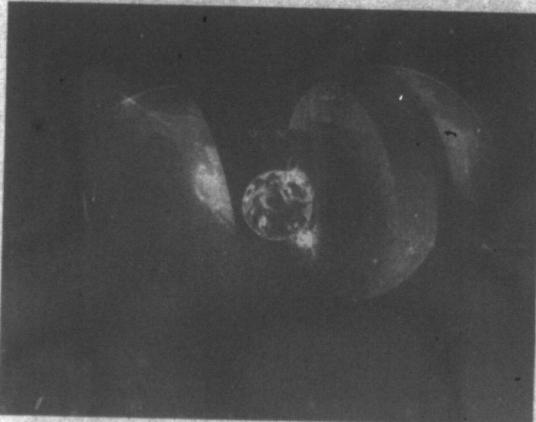


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SHUT DOWN, OR NOT? — Backpage.com, the Internet's U.S. leader in advertisements for illegal sexually-explicit activities, reluctantly shut down its adult ads section last year when a U.S. Senate subcommittee issued a detailed report on the website. (Uncredited image)

Online sex sites will take hit in proposed legislation

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — The U.S. Congress has given overwhelming approval to legislation designed to thwart sex trafficking over the Internet by holding accountable the online sites that facilitate the crime.

The U.S. Senate adopted the bill in a 97-2 vote March 21, barely three weeks after the U.S. House of Representatives passed it in a 388-25 roll call. The bill is now on its way to U.S. President Donald Trump, who is expected to sign it into law.

The Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act (FOSTA) would amend a 1996 anti-obscenity federal law to authorize the prosecution of websites that support the sale of people in the sex trade.

The proposal, which includes provisions from the Senate's Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act (SESTA), would also clarify that trafficking victims have the right to bring civil action against such online sites as the classified advertising company backpage.com.

The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville and other supporters of the bill endorsed the legislative action.

ERLC President Russell Moore said in written comments to Baptist Press (BP) that he is "deeply thankful that Congress has passed this commonsense legislation addressing one of the most significant human rights issues in the world today."

"Human slavery and trafficking are wicked to the core. I look forward to this bill being one important societal step among many in the work to end this scourge in our world."

Donna Rice Hughes, president of the Internet safety orga-

nization Enough Is Enough in Great Falls, Va., described the Senate vote as "a critical step towards draining the cyberswamp of commercial sexploitation."

In a written statement, Rice described the congressional as "nothing short of a David and Goliath victory against the multi-billion dollar trafficking industry and the tech giants who lobbied against the bill's passage."

Rep. Ann Wagner (R-Mo.), FOSTA's sponsor, thanked the Senate for its vote, tweeting, "Today, Congress spoke up for countless survivors of sex trafficking and unequivocally stated that our sons and daughters are NOT for sale."

Though the legislation has yet to be signed into law by the President, the precautionary response by websites involved in sex trafficking and prostitution was almost immediate after the Senate vote.

The online platform Reddit barred several sex worker forums just hours after the Senate passed the bill, according to the news site Reason.com. Other sites including Craigslist, Cityvibe, and Erotic Review shuttered their prostitution ads in the U.S., according to the National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE).

Those steps indicate "the major role Internet companies play in promoting prostitution and sex trafficking" and demonstrate the bill's "power to hold them legally responsible for facilitating these criminal activities," said Lisa Thompson, NCOSE's vice president of policy and research.

"As 'businesses' that help arrange prostitution transactions and which derive earnings from them, there can be no doubt that their executives and owners are

the functional equivalents of sex traffickers (a.k.a. pimps)," Thompson said in written remarks.

"These businesses and their owners represent corporatized sex traffickers, who until [March 21] were a protected class of criminals."

The Internet has grown to dominate trafficking of adults and children for sexual purposes, and backpage.com is reportedly far and away the leading online facilitator of the sex trade. More than 73% of reports by the public to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children concern a backpage.com ad, NCOSE said in January 2017.

The 1996 Communications Decency Act was designed to combat online obscenity and indecency, but courts actually interpreted a section of the law to protect from liability sites involved in sex trafficking.

FOSTA, with SESTA included, would enable states to use their laws to "investigate and prosecute websites that facilitate sex trafficking." It also would make clear that victims of sex trafficking and child sexual exploitation will be able to gain civil judgments against online sites.

Travis Wussow, ERLC's general counsel and vice president for public policy, commended Wagner and Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio), SESTA's sponsor, for their leadership of the bipartisan effort.

"Sex trafficking mars the God-given dignity of millions of people worldwide," Wussow told BP in written remarks. "Victims of sex trafficking deserve justice and protection under the law. This bill is an important step forward in the fight to end sex trafficking."

In just a few days, the Christian world will be celebrating the marvel of God's mighty work of bringing life where there was death and of Jesus being raised from the dead. While not everyone will celebrate Easter, everyone will see at least some momentary glance of the fact that the Christian community is celebrating the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was the day the world changed.

I know there have been momentous days throughout history, but none to equal this. I know that there have been days when storms came through our lives that literally changed the landscape and seemingly changed everything that it touched — but not in the way this event has touched all our lives. I know there have been explosions of volcanoes that may have wiped out entire cities and populations, but still the event did not change the world like this event changed not only this world but the world to come. Easter is the day that the world was changed. For just a few brief moments, let me point out how profoundly the world has been changed.

The world changed because debt turned into deliverance. All of us have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23) and we're going to have to pay our sin debt — or as God provides for us in Christ Jesus, we can be delivered from that debt. At the close of Jesus' suffering on the cross, He said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). That can be literally translated, "The debt is paid in full." The debt that I owe, that you owe, that humanity owes,



Directions
With Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

The Day the World Changed

all of our sins with all of its pain and agony and ramifications, all of that debt was turned into deliverance as Jesus Himself paid the debt that we could not pay in order to give us a life that we could not have apart from Him. It is a day the world changed.

The world changed because the victim became the victor. It appeared as though Jesus had been captured by soldiers, put through mock trials, led out to Golgotha's hill to die a tragic, grueling death, and was victim to a plot and plan carried out by Roman soldiers. The truth is that Jesus was not a victim, but soon He would be the victor. He had to pay our sin debt and then He would rise triumphantly from the dead. The victim appeared to be Jesus

on the cross. The victor was Jesus out of the tomb. Oh, did the world ever change!

The world changed because it was death to life. They put Him in the tomb and that could be the end of the film. Like most movies, it would flash up on the screen, "The End," but not so in this case. When Jesus was put in that tomb, the stone was rolled over that great hole. Soon the screen could have on it, "Not The End But The Beginning," for what appeared to be the conclusion of Easter and the final note of the week was not there at the Garden Tomb. Hanging outside of the tomb ought to have been a great sign saying, "The Beginning." The Beginning of a New Life. The Beginning of Hope. The Beginning of a Future for You and

Me. The Beginning of a life and a world without end had come into existence. The day the world changed.

The world changed because fears became cheers. Listen to the writer of Hebrews who so beautifully describes for us what was taking place. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15). Everyone has some fears in their lives, but probably no greater fear ever existed among human beings as the fear of death.

Scripture says explicitly that Jesus came and died for us so that He could destroy the fear of death.

When you come to know Jesus who loved you, died for you on the cross, and rose again the third day, you can experience the kind of cheers that must have come on that Easter Sunday morning when the word spread all over the area: "He is not here: for he is risen" (Matt. 28:6). Go tell His disciples. Go tell everybody Jesus is alive. He is not here. He is truly alive forevermore. We celebrate the living Christ! Truly, the world changed, and if you've never met Him, today you can trust Him as Lord and Savior, put your faith in Him, and you can find that today in your life the world will change.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

MKR ZYPKP JFAAYL RBYH KURD

BWH, FUL PFWL, PKOYQ AWRRAY

JBWALQYU RD JDHY KURD HY, FUL

ODQMWL RBYH UDR:ODQ DO PKJB WP

RBY IWUCLDH DO CDL.

AKIY YWCBRYYU: PWSRYYU

Clue: I = K

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Acts 4:12

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

OBITUARIES

Algie Lavern "Al" Green Jr., missionary and pastor, died March 7 at his home in Iuka following a lengthy bout with cancer. Green and his wife Emily were international missionaries in Argentina for 16 years, and he pastored four churches mainly in south Mississippi. Green is survived by his wife, Emily Gurley Green of Iuka; a sister,

Patrice Neel of Lumberton; two children, Dennis Hackney (Glen) of Birmingham, Al., and Neil Green of Hattiesburg; and three grandchildren. A memorial service was held March 17 at the Iuka Church, Iuka. An online guest book may be accessed at cutshallfuneralhome.com. Cutshall Funeral Home of Iuka was in charge of arrangements.



GREEN

Correction: In the March 1 issue of The Baptist Record in the obituaries on page nine, Charles Monroe Hargett was incorrectly listed as pastor of Crossway Church (formerly Bowmar Avenue Church) in Vicksburg. He did not serve as pastor of that church. Also, he was identified incorrectly by the last name of "Little" in two locations in the obituary. Little was not part of his name. The Baptist Record regrets the errors.



COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

WE CAN DO MORE together

Church faithful to Cooperative Program support

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

Jeremy Nottingham, senior pastor of First Church, Brandon, had an early understanding of the Cooperative Program. He's a Missionary Kid.

"Growing up in Burkina Faso and Namibia in Africa, I benefited from the faithful giving by Southern Baptist churches back here in the States that kept my family on the mission field. I saw the value of the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Offering [for International Missions] and the other offerings," Nottingham said.

A former staff member at Prestonwood Church in suburban Dallas, Nottingham has committed to supporting the Cooperative Program wherever he's serving. He's been senior pastor at First Church, Brandon, for a little over a year.

"When I arrived in Brandon, the church was already giving 10% every year to the Cooperative Program," he said. "That's a healthy percentage, considering the per church average Cooperative Program giving across the Southern Baptist Convention has declined steadily in recent years and stood at 5.16% in 2016, the last year for which totals are available. (Source: Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.)

Since his arrival, Nottingham said, he has found the congregation open to maintaining that percentage and staying focused on the goal. "We value missions. We



THE NOTTINGHAMHS - Jeremy Nottingham (back, right), senior pastor of First Church, Brandon, recently celebrated his first anniversary as pastor of the Rankin Association church. He is joined by wife Jenna (back, left) and their children (front, from left) Emma, Charlotte, and Logan. (Photo courtesy of First Church, Brandon)

value the Cooperative Program. We want to 'tithe on the tithe' that is coming in to the church."

Nottingham said it is obvious that as the members of First Church, Brandon, remain faithful to their giving commitments, God is blessing all the ministries in which the church is involved. "Increased giving to the

church means increased giving to the Cooperative Program. Right now, we're seeing the largest giving totals in the history of this church. It's great to see how our increased giving is leading to increased giving to the Cooperative Program."

The church emphasizes the scope of the Cooperative Program, from local church missions to Southern Baptist seminaries to the missionary-sending agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention - the International Mission Board is Richmond, Va., and the North American Mission Board in suburban Atlanta.

The Cooperative Program has been characterized by some observers as the greatest missions funding concept in the history of Christendom.

"We're going to continue to educate the membership of this church about the Cooperative Program. We're going to continue to emphasize the Cooperative Program. We're not letting up on our focus on ministry from our local church to worldwide missions. There's no consideration of backing down from what the Lord has called us to do," Nottingham said.

"If all the churches in the Southern Baptist Convention would give just a little more, think of the impact all our gifts could have," he added.

Editor's Note: April 8 is Cooperative Program Sunday in the Southern Baptist Convention. For information and resources about Southern Baptists' channel of missions and ministry support, nationally and internationally, visit sbc.net/cp.

First Person: Sandlots, whirlpools, and the Cooperative Program

By Travis Southern
Correspondent

When I was young, we would spend seemingly endless summers at either one of two places: the baseball diamond or a neighborhood swimming pool.

While there were certainly organized sports teams, most of my baseball career was spent playing pickup games at the sandlot in the middle of our neighborhood. Those were "glory days" of pretending to pitch like Nolan Ryan, steal bases like Rickey Henderson, and play shortstop like Cal Ripken.

Most days at the sandlot were filled with boys living out the dreams of America's pastime. That is, most days. There were some afternoons that were definitely not as fun as others. What made the difference? There were some days when we didn't have enough players show up to play the game.

That's the thing about baseball. It's

a team sport. You can't play catch very well by yourself. Ghost runners and automatic outs are poor substitutes for the real thing.

On afternoons when the Oklahoma sunshine just became unbearable, we would often trade our Louisville Sluggers for beach towels and jam shorts and head to the pool for some cool summer fun.

Inevitably, one of the games we would play between rounds of Marco Polo was making a whirlpool. This would involve all of the kids walking, running, or swimming around the edges of the pool in the same direction. Eventually, the water would be flowing with a momentum of its own and chaos would ensue as you tried not to get swept away by the current.

So what do sandlot baseball and a whirlpool at the neighborhood pool have in common with the Cooperative Program? The answer is teamwork.

A great day of baseball is dependent on enough kids showing up at the lot

ready to play. If the kids in the pool don't work together, the whirlpool idea dies out and the monotony of a pool without a deep end or a slide wears on.

Similarly, the Southern Baptist missions funding concept known as the Cooperative Program only works effectively as churches get in the game, give sacrificially, support their missionaries prayerfully, and engage in the work as a team across our great convention.

For me, this is personal. That baseball card collecting, swimming pool-wrinkled boy was not a Southern Baptist growing up and when he graduated high school, he went off to college not intending to live out his faith.

Because Southern Baptists were giving sacrificially to support collegiate missions through the teamwork known as the Cooperative Program, this young man met a group of intentional disciple-makers at the University of Oklahoma Baptist Student Union.

It forever changed the course of his life. Eventually that young man would attend both Southern and Southeastern

Seminaries at a greatly reduced cost.

All of these blessings were made possible because Southern Baptists showed up and gave sacrificially through the Cooperative Program. The work extends far, far beyond me. Multitudes of missionaries, church planters, chaplains, and seminary professors could testify that they are able to fulfill their calling in part because of the faithfulness of Southern Baptists to give.

Thank you, Southern Baptists. I would not be a Baptist pastor working in a frontier area without your faithfulness to give. While our cooperation may have more eternal significance than a sandlot pickup game or a monster whirlpool, the principle is the same.

By working together, by God's grace we accomplish more as a team than we ever could alone.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Southern is senior pastor of Richland Church in Richland, Wa. His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style.



SOUTHERN

Personally, when I think about the Cooperative Program I think of unity. To me the Cooperative Program is our declaration as Southern Baptist churches that we can do more together than we can apart. In many ways it's not only a responsibility, but also a privilege to lock arms with other brothers and sisters in Christ in an effort to "make disciples of all nations" for the glory of God.

REGION 1
BRAD BECKWITH,
FBC CLEVELAND

What do an electrician from South Carolina, the Cooperative Program, and Southern Baptist Churches have in common? When Lew was a young man, he had the opportunity to travel to Africa and use his skills as an electrician to build houses for Southern Baptist missionaries. While in Africa, Lew heard the call of God to serve Him on the mission field. He returned to South Carolina, surrendered to missions, and began seminary training at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth. Upon graduating Lew returned to Uganda to share the Gospel in a city of over one million people – a far cry from the back roads of South Carolina. The Cooperative Program sent Lew to Africa to build houses, equipped him with a seminary education and then sent him back to Africa with the Good News! With your support, the Cooperative Program is sending, equipping, and supporting missionaries so that millions of people will have the opportunity to hear about Jesus Christ.

REGION 4
WADE RICKS,
FBC COLLINSVILLE

*This report is a listing of contributions made to the Lord's work which were received by the business office of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board from January 1, 2017, through December 31, 2017.

TOP 25 GIFTS TO THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM BY REGION

AT LARGE

REGION 1

REGION 2

CHURCH / ASSOCIATION

THE COMMUNITY CHURCH
THE EXCHANGE
REDEEMER BAPTIST CHURCH
HARVEST BAPTIST CHURCH
CRISTO VIVE BAPTIST MISSION
STARKVILLE COMMUNITY CHURCH
NEW VISION COMMUNITY CHURCH
LIGHTHOUSE MISSION CHURCH
ARISE CHURCH
BRIDGEWAY CHURCH
MARANATHA BAPTIST CHURCH
IGLESIA INTERNACIONAL LAS AMERICAS
PRIMERA PANOLA MISION BAUTISTA
CITY LIGHT CHURCH OF VICKSBURG INC
GRACE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH
EVERGREEN KOREAN BAPTIST CHURCH
CHRIST COMMUNITY CHURCH
THE GATHERING CHURCH OF MCCOMB
CROSSPOINTE COMMUNITY CHURCH
ST MARK MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH
THE BASILEIA CHURCH
METRO GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH
IGLESIA HISPANA DE CLINTON
IGLESIA EL BUEN PASTOR
HATTIESBURG KOREAN BAPTIST CHURCH

CP GIFTS

33,180.90
26,830.21
7,200.00
5,415.84
5,328.56
4,153.00
3,755.85
3,750.00
3,250.00
3,250.00
2,596.00
2,200.68
2,158.88
2,128.35
1,675.60
1,200.00
1,200.00
1,005.40
1,000.00
1,000.00
950.00
823.00
633.13
610.00
600.00

CHURCH / ASSOCIATION

EMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH
NORTH GREENWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH CLEVELAND
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH WINONA
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH GREENVILLE
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH GRENADA
OAKHURST BAPTIST CHURCH
VAIDEN BAPTIST CHURCH
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH WATER VALLEY
FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH GREENWOOD
CARROLLTON BAPTIST CHURCH
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH BELZONI
CLARKSDALE BAPTIST CHURCH
BETHSAIDA BAPTIST CHURCH
CORNERSTONE BAPTIST CHURCH
CROWDER BAPTIST CHURCH
SKENE BAPTIST CHURCH
KILMICHAEL BAPTIST CHURCH
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH INDIANOLA
IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH
EASTSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH LAMBERT
SYLVA RENA BAPTIST CHURCH
EASTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH

CP GIFTS

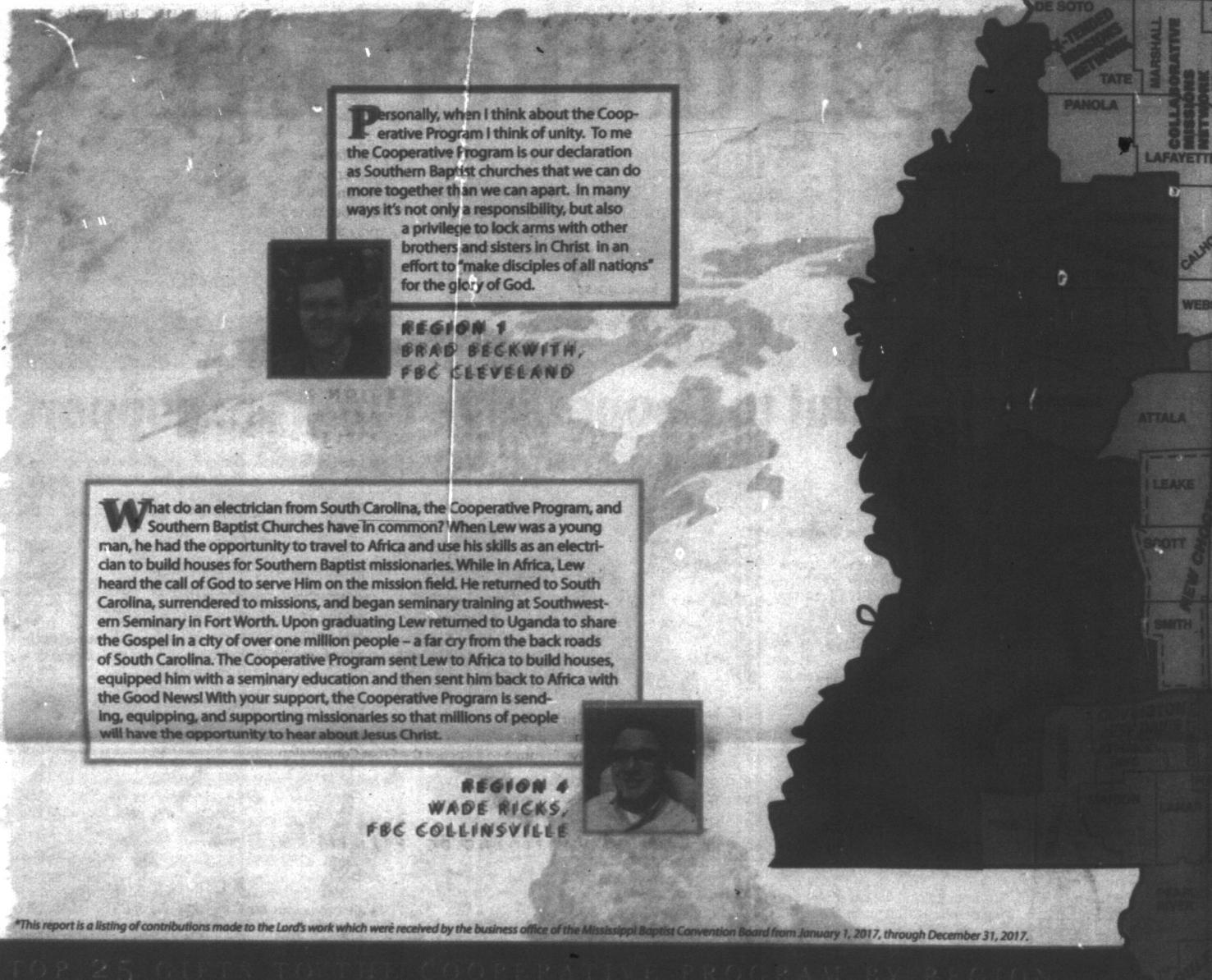
275,606.97
161,025.38
134,926.65
115,937.36
106,968.46
80,635.36
59,903.20
56,339.91
48,000.00
44,524.87
42,079.64
37,424.99
35,451.30
33,984.84
32,559.46
31,371.00
28,724.29
26,651.20
25,990.94
25,496.31
23,824.60
21,920.63
21,321.81
20,726.40
20,599.25

CHURCH / ASSOCIATION

HARRISBURG BAPTIST CHURCH
FAIRVIEW BAPTIST CHURCH
FBC STARKVILLE
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH CORINTH
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OXFORD
CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH BATESVILLE
NORTH OXFORD BAPTIST CHURCH
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH COLUMBUS
LONGVIEW POINT BAPTIST CHURCH
WEST HEIGHTS BAPTIST CHURCH
DESOTO HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH AMORY
HILLCREST BAPTIST CHURCH
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH SENATOBIA
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH RIPLEY
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH NEW ALBANY
MEADOWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH
WHEELER GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH
OAKLAND BAPTIST CHURCH
FBC WEST POINT
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
WEST JACKSON STREET BAPTIST CHURCH
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH EUPORA
LONGVIEW HEIGHTS BAPTIST CHURCH

CP GIFTS

499,151.51
369,981.98
285,821.66
240,034.42
238,603.69
235,124.61
234,982.93
224,517.43
186,516.64
181,795.44
180,310.93
177,759.00
134,964.92
131,297.21
120,069.35
119,061.33
113,564.38
103,987.73
99,786.86
99,037.54
88,974.44
85,000.00
77,400.00
77,000.04
73,800.00





It is a joy to lead a church that loves and believes in the Cooperative Program! Our deep conviction is that we can do more together for the Kingdom of Christ by partnering with other churches than we can simply by ourselves. Having graduated from one of the Baptist colleges in our state and an SBC seminary, I have benefitted greatly from CP giving. I pray that such an investment is bearing fruit now through my ministry at First Baptist Church, Ripley. I am blessed and honored to pastor this great church. Because the lion's share of CP funds goes to missions and education, we gladly give so that others might be blessed in their preparation for ministry, but most importantly, so that the world might be reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

REGION 2
MICAH CARTER,
FBC RIPLEY



One of the first things I learn as a young preacher some fifty years ago was the importance of the Cooperative Program. I believe it is the only way in which to carry out the Great Commission. I believe that working together through supporting the Cooperative Program in local church budgets is the greatest single way to support our missionaries and the agencies that support them.

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has honored me by allowing me to pastor a church where our people support the Cooperative Program to carry out the Great Commission.

REGION 5
CHARLES BURNHAM,
WHITESAND BC, PRENTISS



THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS GIFTS TO CP!

REGION 3

REGION 4

REGION 5

CHURCH / ASSOCIATION	CP GIFTS
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH JACKSON	822,237.74
MORRISON HEIGHTS BAPTIST CHURCH	418,428.44
BROADMOOR BAPTIST CHURCH	367,000.00
FBC MADISON	360,044.58
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH BRANDON	308,577.82
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH CLINTON	234,298.43
BRANDON BAPTIST CHURCH	213,077.94
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH FANNIN	210,722.38
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH BROOKHAVEN	201,969.37
HICKORY RIDGE BAPTIST CHURCH	157,261.88
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH NATCHEZ	139,431.13
PARKWAY BAPTIST CHURCH	138,528.00
PARK PLACE BAPTIST CHURCH	136,860.39
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH VICKSBURG	129,542.13
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH FLORA	122,632.79
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH FLORENCE	112,106.79
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH RAYMOND	104,555.20
LABELLE HAVEN BAPTIST CHURCH	100,302.76
MCCLAURIN HEIGHTS BAPTIST CHURCH	95,427.26
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH MAGEE	93,207.88
HILLCREST BAPTIST CHURCH	91,139.23
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH RICHLAND	87,946.41
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH	84,889.20
MEADOW GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH	80,246.50
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH CRYSTAL SPRINGS	72,469.88

CHURCH / ASSOCIATION	CP GIFTS
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH KOSCIUSKO	165,781.45
NORTHCREST BAPTIST CHURCH	161,659.86
POPLAR SPRINGS DRIVE BAPTIST CHURCH	144,721.01
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH MERIDIAN	125,468.12
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH LOUISVILLE	124,423.46
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH COLLINSVILLE	106,998.00
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH NEWTON	101,812.02
CLARKE VENABLE BAPTIST CHURCH	100,072.36
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH PHILADELPHIA	96,904.20
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH QUITMAN	85,716.58
FOREST BAPTIST CHURCH	85,162.03
HIGHLAND BAPTIST CHURCH	84,638.09
MIDWAY BAPTIST CHURCH	72,839.92
NEW HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH	68,582.57
WILLIAMSVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH	64,688.69
BAY SPRINGS BAPTIST CHURCH	60,314.75
HICKORY BAPTIST CHURCH	53,616.94
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH UNION	51,054.88
FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH	47,937.04
RUSSELL BAPTIST CHURCH	45,441.34
WESTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH	42,634.16
EAST PHILADELPHIA BAPTIST CHURCH	40,509.13
SPRINGFIELD BAPTIST CHURCH	39,085.74
HEBRON BAPTIST CHURCH	37,757.03
OAK HILL BAPTIST CHURCH	36,696.59

CHURCH / ASSOCIATION	CP GIFTS
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH SUMMIT	255,865.64
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH LAUREL	248,431.98
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH COLUMBIA	191,009.49
TEMPLE BAPTIST CHURCH	189,999.96
PETAL-HARVEY BAPTIST CHURCH	166,952.04
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH GULFPORT	159,756.38
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH PICAYUNE	152,437.58
CARTERVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH	141,789.13
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH ELLISVILLE	111,618.46
BUNKER HILL BAPTIST CHURCH	103,118.28
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH PASCAGOULA	93,518.83
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH WAYNESBORO	88,922.81
INDIAN SPRINGS BAPTIST CHURCH	88,082.71
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH SUMRAL	85,262.92
WADE BAPTIST CHURCH	84,964.46
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH BILOXI	84,358.98
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH LONG BEACH	74,723.34
WHITESAND BAPTIST CHURCH	72,882.03
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH WIGGINS	70,937.28
MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH	66,393.00
WEST MCCOMB BAPTIST CHURCH	66,188.54
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH MCCOMB	65,906.25
ROSELAND PARK BAPTIST CHURCH	63,023.95
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH BAY ST LOUIS	61,617.17
TYLERTOWN BAPTIST CHURCH	59,869.37

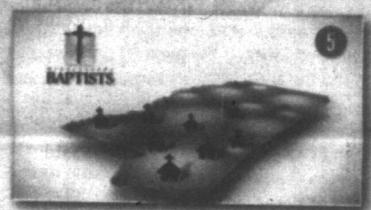
CP DAY



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2018 MISSISSIPPI COOPERATIVE PROGRAM BUDGET

2018 Budget % of Total

GLOBAL MISSIONS/SBC

SUBTOTAL	\$11,766,541	37.50%
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CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

SUBTOTAL	\$6,404,429	20.39%
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CHURCH GROWTH MINISTRIES

SUBTOTAL	\$3,450,638	11.00%
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STATE BENEVOLENT INSTITUTIONS

SUBTOTAL	\$2,179,429	6.95%
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EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP & COMMUNICATION

SUBTOTAL	\$2,676,496	8.51%
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STATE MISSIONS

SUBTOTAL	\$4,916,577	15.65%
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Total CP Budget

Total CP Budget	\$31,404,110	100.00%
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GLOBAL
MISSIONS
37.50%

CHRISTIAN
EDUCATION
20.39%

CHURCH GROWTH MINISTRIES
11.00%

STATE MISSIONS
15.65%

EXECUTIVE
LEADERSHIP &
COMMUNICATION
8.51%

\$100.00% Total CP Budget

Graham still preaching, winning souls for Christ

NASHVILLE (BP) — Billy Graham may be gone from this world, but you can still hear his voice on the radio — at least for the next few days. A Billy Graham tribute channel on SiriusXM will broadcast Graham's sermons around the clock at least through Easter.

The channel is a collaboration between SiriusXM and the Charlotte, N.C.-based Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA), according to the Charlotte Observer.

It will feature Graham's sermons, interspersed with recollections from his son Franklin and remarks from former U.S. presidents from Jimmy Carter to George W. Bush, according

to the channel description on SiriusXM.

A previous version of the channel was broadcast last fall, in honor of Graham's 99th birthday. The channel was also re-voiced after Graham's death.

The newest incarnation of the channel is set to run until April 3 but might be extended, Franklin Graham told the Observer. "We hope (SiriusXM) will decide to keep the Billy Graham channel on the air," he said.

An archive of more than 1,600 of Graham's radio sermons is also available online at billygraham.org/tv-and-radio/radio/audio-archives/.

Graham is not the only legendary preacher whose radio

ministry lives on, according to Religion News Service. Some have continued for decades after their deaths. Among them:

■ Adrian Rogers, longtime pastor of Bellevue Church in suburban Memphis, who died in 2005. His Love Worth Finding radio program, launched in 1987, is still broadcast on the radio and online.

■ James Kennedy, founder of Coral Ridge Ministries, who died in 2007. His Truths That Transform program aired for years on the radio after his death and is still broadcast online.

■ Charles Fuller, founder of Fuller Theological Seminary, who died in 1968. He hosted the Old Fashioned Revival Hour from

1937-1968. The show is still broadcast by Alive in Christ Radio.

■ Vernon McGee, former pastor of Church of the Open Door in Los Angeles, who died in 1988. McGee founded several radio broadcasts, including Thru the Bible, which continues.

The late Bill Skelton, who ran Love Worth Finding after Rogers' death, told Religion News Service it's no surprise some long-dead preachers still connect with a large audience.

"I think as long as people turn on their radio and turn on their television sets and hear somebody teaching and preaching truths that are relevant to this life, the fact that He is alive or not is really not the important thing."



OVER THE AIRWAVES —
Billy Graham (foreground) and Cliff Barrows record *The Hour of Decision* for the radio in 1959. (BGEA photo)

MS POSITIONS

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SPRINGDALE BAPTIST IN RIPLEY IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR THE POSITION OF ASSOCIATE, PASTOR/YOUTH MINISTER. Applicants should E-mail resumes to simcke2003@yahoo.com.

INDIAN SPRINGS BAPTIST CHURCH IN LAUREL, MS IS SEEING A FULL TIME MINISTER OF STUDENTS/ACTIVITIES AND A PART TIME BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC. Send resumes to the Personnel Committee, Indian Springs Baptist Church, 500 Indian Springs Church Road, Laurel, MS 39443.

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SEEKING A FULL-TIME PASTOR — BLACKWATER BAPTIST CHURCH. Located in southern Kemper County. Please mail to Blackwater Church, 634 Natures Way, Meridian, MS 39305.

CRENSHAW BAPTIST CHURCH IS IN NEED OF A PART TIME SONG LEADER. Please call Nathan Perry at 901-606-4086

SEEKING A FULL-TIME PASTOR — BETHANY BAPTIST CHURCH. Located at Meridian in the Whynot community of Southern Lauderdale County. Please email resume to office@whynotbethany.org or mail to Bethany Baptist Church, 4475 Ponds Road, Meridian, MS 39301.

NEW HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH, MONTICELLO, MS SEEKING BI-VOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER. Send Resumes to: 618 Carmel-New Hope Rd, Monticello, MS 39654 Ph: 601-587-2862

First Person: Believers in Easter have no fear of death

By Steve Gaines
Correspondent

As I walked into the hospital, I looked on a visitation card at the name of the man who had requested that I visit him. He was dying of cancer and wanted me to come and pray with him. I was honored to do so.

When I walked into his hospital room, I was taken aback by his appearance. His body was thin. His skin was darkened. His teeth were shattered. All of this was the result of endless rounds of chemo. Yet in spite of all the doctors could do, Jim was dying.

He was on the brink of eternity. He knew he was going to heaven but he was still afraid. He said, "Pastor, I know I am saved. I know that when I die, I'll go to heaven but I'm afraid. I've never died before. I'm afraid of what death will be like. Can you help me?"

We talked about what happens when a Christian dies. We talked about how his spirit and soul would soon leave his body and go directly to God's presence in heaven. Then the Lord gave me a thought to share with Jim that I'd never shared before.

I said, "Jim, when I was young, I was afraid of the dark, especially any dark area in our house. I remember coming home at night with my family. My father knew about my fear of darkness. So, every time we came home, my dad would unlock and open the

door, go inside and turn the light on.

"Then he'd turn around and say, 'Come on in, Steve, everything's fine.' I remember walking into our house in total peace because I knew that I could trust my father to take care of me. I didn't have to be afraid."

Then I said, "Jim, when Jesus came to this earth, He lived a sinless life so He could die for our sins. He gave His life as an atoning sacrifice for God's children and then He was buried and three days later, Jesus walked out of that grave with the keys to death, hell, and the grave itself in His hand."

"Jim, Jesus unlocked the door of eternity, went into the grave, and turned the lights on for you. Now He's saying, 'Jim, come on in, everything is fine.'"

By this time, Jim and I were both crying. In fact, I'm fighting back tears as I write this article.

Jim said, "Pastor, I get it! I can see Jesus opening the door for me! He's turning the light on for me! He's saying, 'Come on in, Jim, everything is fine.' Jesus is the Light of the world! He's turned the light on in my grave! I can die without fear! Thank you, pastor, for helping me."

We prayed and I left. A few days later, Jim stepped out of this life into eternal life — and Jesus was there waiting for him with the lights on.

That's all possible because Jesus died and rose bodily, victoriously and eternally from the grave.

The Apostle Paul said that one day every Christian will die. Each of us will shed this earthly body and our spirit

and soul will enter eternity. At that moment we won't fear the grave any longer because Jesus has conquered it! Death is swallowed up in His victory!

As Paul writes in 1 Cor. 15:53-57: "For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, 'DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY. O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?'

"Jim, Jesus unlocked the door of eternity, went into the grave, and turned the lights on for you. Now He's saying, 'Jim, come on in, everything is fine.'"

Jesus removed the sting of death when He walked into the grave and defeated its power. He turned the light on and says to us, "All is well! Come on in!"

That's why I love Easter. It shouts loudly that because of a bloody cross and an empty tomb we can have what the modern hymn says: "No guilt in life, no fear in death!"

May God bless every Southern Baptist and every Southern Baptist church this Easter. Let's tell the world that Jesus is alive, and all fear is gone!

Gaines is president of the Southern Baptist Convention and senior pastor of Bellevue Church in suburban Memphis. His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style and clarity.

CLASSIFIEDS

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RALLIES

cont. from p. 1

basically a non-Christian state," Stone said.

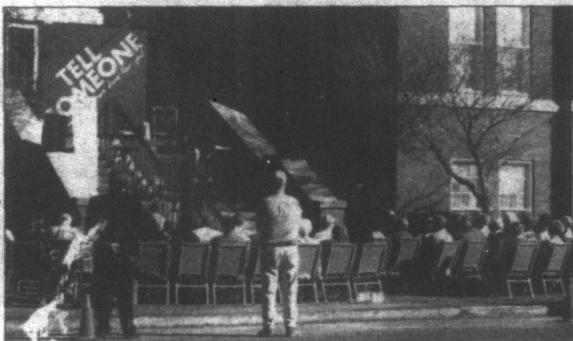
"On any Sunday, there are two million people in Mississippi who are not in any church. We wanted people to see lostness through the eyes of Jesus. That was our driving point," he explained.

MBCB executive director-treasurer Jim Futral was the feature speaker at the rallies held in all 82 counties in Mississippi with thousands of people participating — but the rallies were just the foundation of what was to come next.

Each year, MBCB has a theme for the year that drives the work of the convention. In 2017, the theme was, "Tell Someone What Jesus Has Done For You." In 2018, the theme is, "And the Disciples Were Called Christians in Antioch."

The theme is interpreted in each years' Church Design Handbook available through Stone's office at MBCB, Stone said.

"When we do the Church Design Handbook, the people that receive it are our pastors, associational missions directors, and church leaders," said Stone. "It is a church planning piece for our churches, and is the major piece that communicates the work of



OUTSIDE RALLY — Rally-goers outside First Church, Columbus, on Feb. 24, heard Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, explain the goals of the rally and exhort them to share their faith with lost people all around them. (Photo by Tony Martin)

the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. It focuses on an annual theme that drives our work.

"Hopefully it will impact the people in the pew and get them involved in the theme emphasis each year. It includes all the conferences and events we do over a 16-month period."

The Handbook is a strategic tool. "Our themes are driven by the Scripture, rather than being driven by some hot topic out there," Stone emphasized.

"For over a decade, we have been walking with the disciples of the

early church through the events of and facing the issues in the book of Acts," Futral stated in his preface to the 2018 Handbook. "The questions of the first century continue into the twenty-first century. What does it mean to be a Christian? Equally significant, what does it mean to be a Christian in a non-Christian world? How should Christians go about representing Christ in a world that does not know Him?"

"Each year since 2006, we have been in the book of Acts. We began by looking at the

ABORTION

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The Center for Reproductive Rights, which represents JWHO in the lawsuit along with attorney Robert B. McDuff of Jackson, issued a statement after Bryant signed the bill: "HB 1510 violates longstanding Supreme Court precedent... that a state may not ban abortion before viability. Mississippi's law places substantial civil penalties on doctors who provide that care. The Center for Reproductive Rights argues that by banning

abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy, the law violates decades of well-established, clear precedent under the U.S. Constitution. Courts have consistently struck down similar bans on abortion before viability as unconstitutional."

A battle over the bill is expected to wind its way through the federal court system, with an eventual appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court by the losing side a real possibility.

Kenny Digby, executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention's Christian Action Commission, said, "We as Mississippi Baptists are very grateful for

the men and women of our State House and Senate who passed House Bill HB 1510 to ban abortions after 15 weeks.

"We are grateful for a pro-life Governor Phil Bryant, who signed HB 1510 into state law. Mississippi has been and still is a pro-life state. We are prayerful that this bill will stand up throughout the judicial process."

To view how individual representatives voted on HB 1510, visit tinyurl.com/1510housevote. To view how individual senators voted on HB 1510, visit tinyurl.com/1510senatevote.

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically

via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted. Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lit. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low-resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

first century church and how it could have a 21st century impact. We follow what's happening year to year in the book of Acts, and that's how we arrive at our theme.

"For this year, we look at Acts 11:26 — 'And the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.' We wanted people to tell their stories in the rallies.

"How do we build on that? We wanted people to see the culture of our state — our Antioch. Paul and Barnabas spent a year in Antioch and equipped and trained the people, and engaged the culture for a year.

"The church grew as a result of that, so how do we in Mississippi impact our culture? That's what drove us to our theme."

According to the Handbook, never before have people lived in a culture where five generations have existed at one time. The groups are:

- Traditionalists, born before 1945.
- Baby Boomers, born 1946-1964.
- Generation X, born 1968-1980.
- Millennials, born 1981-2001.
- Generation Z, born in the second half of Gen X and the first half of the Millennials.

"Research provided by Johnny Irvin [MBCB director

of church planting] shows that in 2017, Millennials were Mississippi's largest generational group at 32.1% of the population," Stone said. "That same year Gen Z represented 7% of the state's population, or a total of 49.1% for the two groups."

"In 2022, they will represent 54.6% of our state's population, and those are the two most un-reached groups out there. How do we impact that culture of lostness? How do we get the Gospel into that culture? We began with the people in the Tell Me Rallies. The 3-1-5-1 Challenge was a personal challenge. Now what we're looking at in this year's theme is addressing the culture, looking outside the walls of the church. We're ready and equipped to share our faith. How do we go about communicating that faith?"

Answers to that question are found in the 2018 Church Design Handbook, including 10 ideas to impact culture in your community.

The handbook is available through the MBCB Church Growth Division. For more information, contact Stone at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3310 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 310. E-mail: sbelle@mbcb.org. Web site: mbcb.org.

Need a light?

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you; (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Assurance of the Resurrection • John 20:3-9; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

The headline in our Feb. 22nd local newspaper declared, "America's Pastor: Evangelist Billy Graham dead at 99". On the previous day, this mighty gospel-declarer and fruitful soul-winner quietly slipped into eternity.

But "dead at 99" as our paper reported? Spiritually speaking, hardly! Reverend Graham himself, knowing his earthly departure was coming, spoke these words: "Someday you will read or hear that Billy Graham is dead. Don't you believe a word of it. I shall be more alive than I am now. I will just have changed my address. I will have gone into the presence of God."

Where did Billy Graham get such confidence? He simply believed Jesus' words as He gazed into the tear-stained face of Lazarus' sister, Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me will never die..." (John 11:25-26 NKJV). Yes, today's lesson is the most glorious in all Scripture! First foretold within hours of Satan's depiction in Genesis 3 (vss. 1-15), the crucifixion anguish and resurrection promise is heralded in numerous references, and was often foretold by Jesus Himself as He sought to prepare His disciples for what His Father had ordained.

John's account of the crucifixion and resurrection story seems to take place soon

after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:43-55), and the Passover was imminent. The first section of this week's focal passages records the early-morning events that occurred three days after this annual observance. In the pre-dawn hours, Mary Magdalene and other women came to the tomb, bringing spices to anoint Jesus' body (see also Luke 24:1-3). But there was no corpse! After Mary notified Peter and John about the vacant tomb, the two disciples ran to investigate this seemingly-strange turn of events.

Racing to the gravesite, John got there first, with Peter not far behind. As John peered in to the hewn-out rock, trying to comprehend the situation, Peter rushed right in when he arrived. All he found was the cloth that had encased Jesus' body, and a neatly-folded head-covering nearby. Surely not the work of the Lord's enemies, or grave-robbers in a hurry! When John saw the grave clothes, he "believed" (vs. 8), but this verse also says, "they did not know the Scripture, that he must rise again from



Explore the Bible

with Ann Maniscalco

the dead." So what he "believed" then was probably that Jesus' body was indeed gone. Luke details two times later that day that Jesus met with his disciples, first to two on the Emmaus road, and then to the eleven. With this larger group, "He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen" (Mark 16:14). Then He patiently "opened their understanding" of the Scriptures (Luke 24: 2-32; 36-45).

Our Corinthian passage looks back at the resurrection, explaining its necessity,

and the results to us today. The "firstfruits" (vs. 20 and 23), a term familiar to Jewish believers, could describe a firstborn child or animal, or the first harvested crops. Each was considered holy, and belonging to the Lord. It was also a foretaste of expected, continued blessings. Jesus' resurrection assures believers that "in Christ, all shall be made alive" (vs. 22).

The resurrection also foretells a time when Christ will come again, sin and death

(which began with Adam's transgression; vs. 21) will be abolished, all powers and enemies that rail against Christ will be defeated, and He will "deliver the kingdom to God the Father" (vs. 24), that God "may be all in all" (vs. 28).

Yes, Joseph and Nicodemus buried Jesus, securing the gravesite with a massive stone. The disciples were numb with despair and confusion. Mary Magdalene wept before an empty tomb. But then the risen Christ appeared, and everything changed! Death was defeated, hopelessness gave way to joy, and salty tears were dried.

Believers today can face life just as triumphantly. "But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57 NIV).

As you reflect on this Easter season, consider finding a quiet place, taking up paper and pen, and slowly reading one of the gospel resurrection accounts daily (Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-12, and John 20:3-9). End with 1 Corinthians 15:19-28; 55-57 for Paul's slant. As you read, ask God to reveal something new. Jot down your insights, and consider sharing these thoughts with others. He is risen...hallelujah!

Maniscalco is a member of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Ocean Springs.

God Is Faithful • Luke 24:1-12

People break promises. Even when they have the best intentions, people aren't always able to do what they said they'd do. If we experience that enough, the unfaithfulness of others can cause us to lose hope. The early disciples experienced a loss of hope when Jesus was crucified. God remained faithful to what He said He'd do, and He proved His faithfulness when He raised Jesus from the dead. We have a sure hope because God is faithful.

Luke 24:1 - 3. The resurrection shows God makes the impossible possible.

Want to destroy Christianity? Then disprove the Resurrection. As we break down this passage, you might say that the women were emotional wrecks at the tomb, and were out of their minds with grief. You could argue they went to the wrong tomb.

Luke really wanted to drive home the point that these women were the first to find the empty tomb. They went to the tomb, and had probably been wondering how they'd get in the tomb itself in order to pack Jesus' body with spices. Maybe they'd rehearsed what they would say to the Roman soldiers - "Can you roll the stone away for us so that we can prepare Jesus' body?"

That turned out to be a non-issue. The stone had been rolled away already. There

was no body. The tomb was opened, just so these women could see for themselves. So for Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna, and some other women, this was not what they had expected. The impossible had become possible.

Luke 24:4 - 8. The resurrection shows that God always does what He says.

As soon as the reality of the empty tomb sank in, two angels appeared. Scripture identifies them as "two men ... in dazzling clothes" (v. 4, CSB). Matthew 28:2 and Mark

16:5 mention only one of the two, the one who actually spoke. The angel gently chastises the women: "Why are you looking for the living among the dead? He is not here, but he has risen!" (v. 5 - 6). This is the Easter story in a nutshell. Then the angel goes on to say, "Remember how he spoke to you when he was still in Galilee" (v. 6), and continues by reminding them of Jesus' own words about his death and resurrection.

The women then remembered Jesus' words (v. 8). Many times Jesus had told His followers just exactly what was to happen. Over and over, His followers struggled and even rejected what He had to say - it just didn't fit into the narrative they'd put together for themselves. One reason the disciples were so despondent after the crucifixion was simply because they'd forgotten His words - and that knowledge should encourage us when our own minds are crippled by doubt.

God always - always - does what He says.

Luke 24:9 - 12 - The resurrection shows God is not

bound by unbelief.

One of my favorite quotes from C. S. Lewis is: "A man can no more diminish God's glory by refusing to worship Him than a lunatic can put out the sun by scribbling the word, 'darkness' on the walls of his cell." It helps to understand that whether one believes in the resurrection or not, it doesn't change the nature of God.

The women in this account were obey-

ing the most basic demands put on all believers: Come, see, go, and tell. After this amazing encounter at the tomb, they went immediately to share what they'd experienced with the remaining eleven disciples and the others with them.

They were met with a disappointing response, something along the lines of: "Ooh-kaay... yeah. Right." To their minds the disciples were listening to madness... it just didn't square with what they'd already witnessed - a bloody crucifixion, an entombed body, and the evaporation of hope. The women had moved emotionally from grief to elation and now to frustration.

Peter acted true to character. Leaving everyone else behind, he tears out of the room they were huddled in and goes to the tomb himself. When he gets there, and sees the abandoned death clothes, he goes away amazed.

I love it when skeptics are faced with an event they can't explain away apart from knowing God had something to do with it. It is ironic that the first disbelievers of the resurrection were the disciples themselves. For us today, we need to embrace what 2000 years of skepticism has not been able to erase. Jesus is alive. We can't keep that to ourselves.

Martin is Associate Editor of The Baptist Record.

TURKEY

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administration to "redouble their ongoing efforts to secure Pastor Brunson's release."

Brunson has lived in Turkey 23 years, and his pastorate is a small evangelical Presby-

terian church in Izmir, according to the USCIRF website. Both President Trump and members of Congress have called for Brunson's release. Former U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson asked Turkey to release Brunson during a visit there in February, the USCIRF stated.

In a March 9 address to the United Nations Human Rights Council, Brunson's daughter Jacqueline called the allegations against her father "absurd" and said her family "has suffered greatly" since Andrew Brunson was first detained in October 2016, the USCIRF reported. David Curry, president

of the religious liberty watchdog group Open Doors USA, said Brunson "essentially" is a "hostage" held by Turkey as part of its attempt to pressure the U.S. to extradite Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen, who Turkish President Recep Tayip Erdogan believes is responsible for a failed coup attempt in 2016.

"There's not a lot that can be diplomatically done by Christian churches here because we're talking about a dictator who's not going to respond to our pleas," Curry said in a news release, "and in some cases, in some ways, it may be counterproductive so we're going to have to be prayerful about this."

College News



Catherine Snyder, an English/Exercise Science honor student, and Jerri Lamar Kantack, associate professor of music, have been named the **BLUE MOUNTAIN COLLEGE HEADWAE** student and faculty member for the 2017-2018 academic year. HEADWAE - Higher Education Appreciation Day/Working for Academic Excellence - was established by the Mississippi Legislature in 1988 and recognizes students and faculty members from each of the state's 36 public and private colleges and universities. Pictured (left to right) are BMC President Barbara McMillin, Snyder, and Kantack.

Revivals & Homecomings

► **Southside Church, Vicksburg:** Revival, Apr. 1 - 4; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Don Savell, speaker.

► **Lantrip Church, Bruce:** Revival, Apr. 1 - 5; Sun., 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; John Hale (Sun.), Larry Haggard (Mon.), Larry Wicker (Tues.), and Benny Hill (Wed.), speakers; Sput Deaton, music director; DeAnna Wooten, pianist; Robert Earl Alexander, pastor.

Staff Changes



WESTWOOD CHURCH, MERIDIAN, has called Jason Alford as music minister (shown with his wife Rhonda), and Philip Marshall as pastor (shown with his wife Shelia, third from left.)

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Noon to 1 p.m.: We will eat a delicious country buffet at a local restaurant.

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The Discussion Session includes a test, the Range Exercises are scored, and these results are given to your Church. Cost for this Church Security Team Course and meal is \$115/person.

3 A Mississippi Enhanced Concealed Carry Weapon Class will be offered to team members not yet certified.

This class may be taken on another day before or after the Church Security Team Course. Cost is \$98/person.

Your instructors are highly qualified to teach this Course. Their accomplishments include winning six individual gunfights with handgun, rifle, or shotgun; having a Master of Religious Education degree; being an infantry company commander in Vietnam; being awarded the U.S. Army's Expert Infantryman, Combat Infantryman, and Distinguished Rifleman Badges; being certified as a Mississippi Law Enforcement Instructor; and having a doctorate in Adult Education and Criminal Justice.

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